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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (01/05): "WHY ARE [PALESTINIANS]
THE ONLY ONES WHO HAVE TO RESPECT AGREEMENTS?"

Main Stories:

All papers lead with red-font headlines that continue weekend reporting on the Israeli "aggression" on Gaza. In photo coverage, Al Quds leads with an oversized photo of a frightened, crying Palestinian girl, while Al Ayyam runs a photo of an Israeli tank firing on the Strip. Al Hayat Al Jadida's lead photo shows the bodies of dead Palestinians at a Gaza hospital and reports that Palestinian rockets continue to shower onto Israeli towns as the U.N. Security Council fails to adopt a statement on Gaza. All papers report on the number of Palestinian dead and wounded, with numbers ranging from 512-518 dead and 2,400-2,650 wounded. The papers also cite Israeli military statements in reporting on the killing of an Israeli officer and wounding of 38 Israeli soldiers in the ground operation. All front pages cite Israeli daily Yedeot Aharanot in further reporting that Israel is demanding the establishment of a buffer zone along the Gaza-Egypt border area to prevent arms smuggling. Al Quds adds in a "last minute" front page item citing AFP, that Israeli Premier Olmert has refused calls by Russia, France and Germany to halt the Israeli operation on Gaza.

Comments made by Vice President Dick Cheney to CBS are highlighted on Al Quds' front page and in Al Ayyam's inside reporting. Cheney stated that Israel has not asked for U.S. approval of a ground operation in Gaza nor informed the U.S. of the goals or timing of the operation. The papers also report that Secretary of State Rice cancelled a visit to China because of recent "developments" in the Middle East.

"U.S. foils U.N. Security Council move to adopt statement calling for immediate ceasefire" in Gaza, according to Al Ayyam's front page. In further U.N. news, the paper cites AFP in front page reporting on Arab League Secretary General Amr Musa's January 4

statement that there is no guarantee that Arab states will succeed in obtaining a binding Security Council resolution to force Israel to halt its "offensive" on Gaza. Musa's statements were made upon his departure with an Arab delegation to the U.N in New York, the paper notes.

PLO reaction to events in Gaza is reported on Al Quds' front page. The paper highlights that the PLO's Executive Committee released a statement after its January 4 meeting calling on Arab states to protect Gaza against the "on-going killing and destruction." Coverage also includes statements by Palestinian Authority President Abbas calling on all Palestinian factions should agree to unity talks.

Al Hayat Al Jadida's front page notes the surprise visit by Jordan's Foreign Minister Al Bashir to Cairo on January 4, where he stated that Jordan reserves the right to reconsider relations with any country, "especially Israel." Al Quds' front page quotes Jordan's King Abdullah also hinting that he might, "reconsider relations with Israel" and stating that, "Jordan will do everything to stop the aggression."

In international reaction to events in Gaza, Al Quds' front page cites AFP in reporting on Russia's decision to send Middle East envoy Sultanov to the region to seek a cease-fire to the current crisis in Gaza. The reporting also notes that Russia has called for an international conference to discuss Middle East issues and an end to the Israeli blockade on Gaza. In another front page article, the paper runs January 4 statements by French President Sarkozy demanding that the "war in Gaza stop." Sarkozy made the statements

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in Cairo after a meeting of the EU troika and Egyptian Foreign Minister Abu Al Ghayt, the paper notes. An inside report in Al Hayat Al Jadida cites AFP in reporting on statements by Czech Foreign Minister Schwarzenberg calling a previous EU Presidency statement that Israel's operations in Gaza were "self-defense", "a misunderstanding." Schwarzenberg added that, "no country should attack civilians even within the framework of defensive acts," according to the report.

Al Hayat Al Jadida and Al Quds front page warnings by the Palestinian telephone company that land and mobile telephone and internet services in Gaza may collapse at any time due to "severe damage sustained from the fighting."

WEEKEND STORIES:

Sunday, January 4

"Israeli army launches ground offensive in the Gaza Strip- 470 martyrs and 2,400 wounded over the past eight days - the resistance promises confrontation," according to dramatic lead headlines in Al Quds and Al Ayyam. Coverage highlighted Israeli Army announcements that the ground operation "will continue for several days" and that the Israeli Cabinet stressed that the aim of the offensive was to "control" the areas from which rockets are being fired into Israel. Israeli jets continued their bombing campaign of civilian targets including mosques and gas stations while Palestinian resistance continued preparations "to confront this aggression... warning that Israeli forces will pay dearly," according to the reports.

Al Ayyam's and Al Quds' front pages reported on a series of measures announced by the Palestinian Authority (PA) to mitigate the impact of Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip on the civilian population. Measures will include housing assistance and coordinated efforts with private sector entities and the UN. The papers also front paged news about, "continued popular demonstrations in the West Bank and 'inside the green line' against the aggression."

" Hamas and Islamic Jihad propose new terms for a ceasefire," according to Al Quds' front page. Reporting that cites London-based Al Hayat daily, explains that the groups announced on January 3 that they will not accept a ceasefire unless it includes the end of "the siege" on Gaza, the re-opening of border crossings, and new terms

for a ceasefire. A high ranking Hamas official said that time was on Hamas' side and that the Israelis are incapable of achieving victory. He also told Al Hayat that the group has already started using new rockets with a range of 56 kilometers and noted that Israel's targeting of Gaza civilians is meant to incite the public against Hamas, reporting concludes.

All dailies and several Arab on-line news agencies ran extensive text from a U.S. Consulate General Jerusalem press release detailing current humanitarian aid to Gaza.

Saturday, January 3

All front pages highlighted, "White House: Israel has the right to defend itself- Rice calls for a permanent and durable ceasefire." The papers run January 2 statements by President Bush noting that the U.S. is working towards reaching a "serious" ceasefire in the Gaza Strip that would include mechanisms to stop the smuggling of weapons. Reporting notes that the White House earlier announced that the decision to launch a ground operation in the Gaza Strip was

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a decision for Israel alone, since it falls within the framework of Israel's right to defend itself. The White House "only" expressed hope that Israel would avoid civilian casualties, reporting noted. The papers ran extensive quotes by Secretary of State Rice from January 2 regarding a permanent ceasefire that would prevent a return to a situation where Hamas could continue rocket attacks on Israel from the Gaza Strip.

All front pages highlight civilian suffering caused by Israeli air raids: "Day 7 of the massacre: 431 martyrs and 2,280 wounded." Headlines also noted Egypt's request to Israel not to launch a ground operation in the Gaza Strip and comments by Hamas leader Misha'al that Israeli air raids have failed to diminish Hamas' military capabilities. Finally, U.N. calls for a comprehensive truce and the return of the Gaza Strip to Palestinian Authority control was noted in reporting.

BLOCK QUOTES:

1) George Jaqaman opines in Al Ayyam under the title, "Conditions for the upcoming truce: Choices and difficulties" (01/05): "It seems unlikely that Hamas will accept a return to the 2005 [Rafah] crossing agreement sponsored by U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice... on the other hand, the [Palestinian Authority] won't accept Hamas' control of the crossing... the possible compromise solution...is... full [EU] control of the crossing, including the Palestinian side [of the crossing]..."

2) Columnist Azam Abu Al Sud writes in Al Quds under the title, "Why are we the only ones who have to respect agreements?" (01/05): "Agreements are made to be violated... this is the law of the jungle practiced by the strong... when will we feel strong enough to violate agreements that are totally or partially violated by the other side? Why don't we amend or seek to amend agreements as circumstances and international and regional power dimensions change? Why don't we amend agreements that did and continue to do us injustice everyday? Why do we respect agreements with Israel and don't respect our agreements with each other?"

WALLES